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UNCLAS DUSHANBE 002012

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STATE FOR EUR/CACEN, DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [RS](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTERING DISINFORMATION IN DUSHANBE

1. SUMMARY: Is the United States responsible for the "Color Revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan? Are Americans employed in such organizations as CARE and the National Democratic Institute spies fomenting revolution? Are U.S.-funded legal assistance programs designed to turn children against their parents? If the Russian disinformation campaign is to be believed, all of the above is true, and unfortunately, much of it is believed.

2. The aggressive, on-going Russian disinformation campaign in Tajikistan and throughout the former Soviet States targets American NGOs, USAID and U.S. programs, calling into question U.S. initiatives, and sometimes succeeding in shutting down U.S.-supported programs. To advance the President's and the Secretary's U.S. foreign policy and transformational diplomacy,

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Post requests that the Department coordinate a regional response to counter this campaign and highlight American programs and intentions. END SUMMARY

3. Central Asian populations have almost no other source of news and information than Russia's mass media and their own Russian-dominated state media. Democratic forces in the region, such as they are, trust the propaganda and believe the United States has backed off in its support for democracy because of superior pressure from Moscow. The anti-American disinformation campaign is coming from the old-guard in Moscow who have been on a roll for a year now, with plenty of coverage in the press, and access to high level Tajik officials behind-the-scenes.

4. The Tajik press has published several anti-NGO articles in the last six months. Two examples include:

- On September 29, Tajik language Tojikiston published an article critical of CARE International's activities in Tajikistan, alleging CARE deliberately introduced contaminated seed potatoes into Tajikistan.

- On 24 November, the Tajik State-owned, Tajik language newspaper Jumhuriyat published "What does ABA/CEELI want with the teenagers?" The slanderous attack on a U.S.-NGO alleged that the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative is out to create young revolutionaries. ABA/CEELI's "Street Law" program, designed to introduce eighth to tenth grade students to legal issues and the profession of law is now in jeopardy because of the article.

5. In November, Embassy Dushanbe began a media campaign to educate the public on NGOs' and USAID's activities in Tajikistan. To date, Post has submitted three articles to the local press highlighting NGOs for their work in micro credit assistance, business investment development, and business and economic law. So far, Tojikiston is the only newspaper to publish the articles, and only in English, which limits the public diplomacy outreach. The campaign will continue well into 2006.

6. The Embassy took the high road on the CARE attack, and did not respond to the charge, thereby not creating a media frenzy. On the ABA/CEELI attack, the Ambassador took the offensive, received positive press, and effectively refuted the charges. Post will continue to press locally, but would sincerely appreciate every bit of high-level assistance we can get. The Secretary's defense of NGOs in Russia, for example (on her Kiev

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trip) helped to offset the tone from the Russian press, but this message has to be loud enough and clear enough to be heard through the noise created by the Russian press.

7. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov believes the United States plotted the "color revolutions", (which have failed and led to instability) and the U.S. is responsible for igniting a "New Cold War." He characterized USAID as a "U.S. NGO" bent on

dominating the CIS "information space." This mischaracterization of U.S. efforts in the region needs to be addressed directly, because the mistrust it generates impacts so very directly on U.S. interests. Right now the U.S. Government seem to be losing the game in this region on a day-to-day basis. More support from Washington, for our NGO's, our investors, and

our U.S. assistance would be most welcome.
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